

generations of service to your country and for being an example to all of us.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, we had an opportunity yesterday to share with Dana, his wife, his mom and step-dad and hear the staff talk about Damon. It was clear that Damon had created a family, that they loved him, that they respected him as a professional, and that his leadership was evident across this entire exchange. It was heartwarming to hear those stories about Damon and the way he led the staff of the committee.

We will miss him. I ask our Nation to continue to pray for his wife and family as they walk this dark path, knowing that he made this world a better place to live and that he helped mightily across a long period of time to help protect us from some really bad folks.

We love you, Damon Nelson, and we will miss you.

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. Speaker, this is American Education Week, and I rise to honor and thank the teachers and school administrators who have dedicated their lives to ensure our future generations are stronger than ever.

There are over 50 million kids in our public schools today. Back in 2015, before the Every Student Succeeds Act was signed into law, the Federal approach to education relied heavily on standardized testing to measure academic achievement. While I understand the importance of testing to measure academic growth from year to year, there should be a number of indicators for evaluating academic success and improvement for both schools and students.

After that bill passed in 2015, the goal shifted from teaching children more efficiently to inspiring lifelong learning in students. I applaud educators for embracing this goal, and I am hopeful that this approach will better prepare millions of students for the challenges that await them in life and in the workforce.

While on the subject of Federal education, we cannot avoid the debate over the amount of taxpayer money we send to schools throughout the country. There is and always will be bipartisan agreement that we should make sure schools have the resources they need in order to be successful. But in the coming appropriations cycle, and in future ones, we must also remember that additional spending does not necessarily improve student performance. This has been proven time and time again, Mr. Speaker.

One data point I would refer folks to is high school graduation rates, which have remained stagnant since the 1970s. What we have seen is very unfortunate: the system continues to grind forward, with costs going up each year and our

efficiency going in the opposite direction.

I will continue to fight for education reforms aimed at improving resource allocation and boosting student performance. Recognizing the shortfalls within our K–12 education may not be a popular talking point, but I think it is worth emphasizing the need to act responsibly and address the problems students, parents, and educators face.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by saying two things. The first is a simple thank you to the teachers, including those teachers in my own family, who have dedicated their life to serving students. Your hard work does not go unnoticed. The second thing is that I will work hard to improve our education system for students in my district and around the country.

CITY OF DAVID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, last month, I was privileged to stand in the city of David, the site of ancient Jerusalem.

Just a few feet from the Western Wall, the city of David is the place where Jerusalem began. It is a place I have regularly visited over the past few years, joined by my fellow Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike.

I can think of no better place than the city of David to express that the United States knows what the Jewish people have known for 3,000 years: Jerusalem is the historic capital of Israel.

This reality was reinforced when the United States correctly relocated our Embassy to Jerusalem earlier this year. I call upon more countries to do the same.

The historic bond is evidenced by the incredible discoveries that are being unearthed in the archeological excavations throughout the city of David. These excavations affirm the millennia-old connection of the Jewish people to Jerusalem not as a matter of faith, but as a matter of historical fact, despite UNESCO's ongoing, shameful efforts to declare otherwise.

Among the most significant discoveries presently being unearthed in the city of David is the ancient pilgrimage road. Built over 2,000 years ago, the pilgrimage road, running from the Pool of Siloam at the southern tip of the city of David to the footsteps of the Western Wall and Temple Mount, served as the main thoroughfare of the Second Temple Jerusalem. Millions of people joined together to ascend to the temple during the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

Both the pilgrimage road and the Pool of Siloam have deep significance to Jews and Christians alike. It holds profound meaning to countless millions of Americans. Antiquities discov-

ered along the pilgrimage road tell the story of both the vibrant culture of the Second Temple period Jerusalem and the devastating destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, which ended tragically in the year 70 C.E.

In the future, visitors of all faiths and backgrounds will be able to walk this route of their ancestors, upon the very flagstones as their ancestors 2,000 years ago.

In the Givati parking lot excavation, another excavation in the city of David, 10 layers of ancient Jerusalem civilization dating back some 2,700 years have been uncovered. The layers include Jewish, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Persian, Muslim, Crusader, and Ottoman. So each visitor to the city of David can truly say: "I also have a connection to Jerusalem."

In this very excavation, as you can see in this poster, in a structure dating back 2,500 years to the Biblical First Temple period in Jerusalem, a seal with ancient Hebrew writing was found. I have a replica of that seal in my office, which was presented to me in a meeting I had with Ze'ev Orenstein, a representative from the city of David, together with my colleague, Congressman ELIOT ENGEL. On the seal was the name Eliana, daughter of Ga'el. I can't even begin to describe my emotions when I learned that a seal with almost my very own name was found in the city of David.

I, like countless Americans, feel a deep, personal connection to Jerusalem, her history, her heritage, and her holiness.

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In fact, it is only over the last 51 years of Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem that people of all faiths and all backgrounds have enjoyed freedom of access and worship at their holy sites, whether they are Christians, whether they are Jewish, whether they are Muslims. Such freedoms cannot be taken for granted in the Middle East where, with the very exception of Israel, the only democracy in the region, they are not easy to find.

During the nearly 3 decades that I have had the honor of serving this wonderful institution, support for Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish State of Israel has been bipartisan, and I call on my colleagues from both sides of the aisle in the coming Congress to ensure that that never changes, to ensure that the historic bond between the Jewish people and Jerusalem remains undeniable.

Together with millions of Americans, I salute the work of the City of David Foundation and especially my friend Ze'ev, who did not even want me to mention him—tough—in uncovering our shared history in Jerusalem, making it accessible to all of us who want to experience these discoveries for themselves.

So congratulations to Ze'ev—I have said it again—for the discoveries at the City of David. Many more to come.